

Chicago Daily Tribune

THE WORLD'S GREATEST NEWSPAPER

FOUNDED JUNE 10, 1847

RAISING THE RANSOM

Nothing should be allowed to interfere with the ransoming of the prisoners taken by Castro at the Bay of Pigs. President Kennedy lately has blamed himself publicly for the mismanagement of the invasion that resulted in the capture and imprisonment of these unfortunate men. It is only right, therefore, that he and his colleagues in the administration take an interest in freeing the victims.

Once the men have been released the time will have come to inquire into the manner of collecting the ransom.

Various news dispatches have said that the men are to be traded for 53 million dollars in food and drugs. The food, it may be assumed, will come from the government's surplus stores. The drugs are being provided by a number of pharmaceutical houses scattered around the country. One of them has acknowledged that its share amounts to more than 2 million dollars.

The one thing that is altogether clear is that the drug houses are not in the business of rescuing imprisoned Cubans. It must be an error—and it may be a politically inspired error—to describe the medicines and hospital supplies given to the Red Cross for delivery to Castro as “contributions” or “charitable donations.” The sums involved are altogether too large to make the explanation plausible. Officers who have away their companies’ property on any such scale would lay themselves open to stockholders’ suits for recovery and to commitment to an asylum.

Several explanations have been offered that might make sense. One is that the drug houses have been promised tax savings that will compensate them for the value of the goods sent to Cuba. As it is, a corporation must pay 52 per cent of its net profit in income taxes. If the drug houses were allowed to deduct from income the value of the stuff turned over to the Red Cross the tax saving might be large enough to cover the cost of the goods delivered, especially if the values were somewhat exaggerated. This arrangement would work only if the companies were given a firm promise that the income tax deduction would not be challenged.

A pledge to the drug houses of immunity from investigation and prosecution might serve, also, as a powerful inducement.

We know that the whole 53 million was not raised thru the private contributions of Cubans in exile and others. Much money may have been raised in this way but anything approaching 53 million seems out of the question. Compare Castro's price, for example, with the \$16,115,000 goal of the Chicago Community Fund, which has not yet been reached despite intensive campaigning in a wealthy and charitably inclined community. Maybe Castro is only talking about 53 million and will settle for a good deal less.

Once the victims are free, the American people will expect an accounting of how the ransom money was raised. The mere possibility that some or much of it came, directly or indirectly, from the federal treasury gives Congress all the justification it may need for investigating the transactions.

CPYRIGHT